**Group 2:**

**Miyoko’s Kitchen**

**Start-up, Diversity and Market Entry**

Please note: it is important that you work together in your group to conduct desk research into the company, industry and market. You should not rely solely on the information provided below.

**Brief Case Synopsis – additional secondary desk research required**

Miyoko’s Kitchen is a small-batch American vegan cheese manufacturer that was started in Fairfax, California by founder Miyoko Schinner, with help from Lisa Shanower, CEO and Natalie Hanson, Creative Director. The businesses started in founder Miyoko’s home kitchen. When the team of three entrepreneurs began they did not have a company name, production facility or even a brand identity. What Miyoko had was what the team believed to be an amazing product. Seven months later, the company, which was initially called ‘Miyoko’s Kitchen’, started manufacturing organic, cashew nut cheese. In less than 3 weeks after launching Miyoko’s Kitchen, the company pre-sold over 10,000 pounds of vegan cheese. The start-up quickly secured a very impressive $1 million in seed money. The first investor was Seth Tibbott, the founder of Tofurkey, an already well-established vegan brand who Miyoko had met at various vegan food trade fairs.

Miyoko’s Kitchen has since changed its name to ’Miyoko’s Creamery’, they have extended their range of vegan products and moved to a much larger facility in Petaluma, California. According to Natalie, Creative Director, the key strategic priorities for the company are branding, commerce, environmental design, packaging, marketing and customer experience. This raises questions about what is strategic and what is operational and what the company needs to do to consolidate, grow and establish some form of sustainable competitive advantage.

In a recent interview with the ‘Encompass Animal Protection’ movement Miyoko, the founder of Miyoko’s Creamery, was asked about her role and the question and response are reproduced here:

***How has being a woman of colour helped empower your brand? How has it been difficult?***

*Miyoko replied: I’ve been on a bunch of panels recently where I’m the sole woman on the panel surrounded by white males. It’s always an interesting dynamic but I’m not scared of it—I just speak louder.*

*When I go to trade shows I’ve noticed that people naturally gravitate to the one older white male in the group. They’ll assume that that’s the person they should talk to. Eventually someone will say, “You should talk to her.”*

*At a recent trade show, a man came up to me and said, “I saw you yesterday but I thought you were one of the workers. I’m sorry I didn’t talk to you then.” Those were his words. He made it clear he wasn’t trying to insult me, but I’m sure he thought that because I’m a woman of colour. The way I look can impact perceptions and it’s not necessarily for the better.*

*On the other hand, being a woman of colour makes me more accessible. It’s created an interest in the company because people connect to me to in a way they may not to a white male CEO. People have told me I seem like someone you can just talk to. I don’t know if it’s because I’m a woman of colour, or if it’s because we’re doing more on social media, but I’ve had people approach me and tell me, “You seem like a real person.”*

Case study brief

Your task is to work together to conduct desk research into the company, industry and market and to conduct analysis from a range of different perspectives – context, the firm, strategic change and culture and strategy decision making processes, to propose strategic recommendations that will allow Miyoko’s Creamery to consolidate its position, establish sustainable advantage, continue to grow, respond to change and institute effective strategy decision making processes and practices. See the seminar Schule for a detailed breakdown.

Sources:

http://nataliehansen.com/portfolio/miyokos-kitchen/

<https://encompassmovement.org/blog/interview-with-miyoko-schinner-of-miyokos-kitchen>

https://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/news/california-court-finds-no-consumer-confusion-in-labeling-of-miyokos-dairy-alternatives.html